

NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE CONSERVATION PRACTICE STANDARD

WETLAND CREATION

(Ac.)

CODE 658

DEFINITION

The creation of a wetland on a site that was historically non-wetland.

PURPOSE

To establish wetland hydrology, vegetation, and wildlife habitat functions on soils capable of supporting those functions.

CONDITIONS WHERE PRACTICE APPLIES

This practice applies only to sites where hydric soils do not exist and the objective is to establish specific wetland functions.

This practice does not apply to:

- The treatment of point and non-point sources of water pollution (Constructed Wetland – Code 656).
- The rehabilitation of a degraded wetland or the reestablishment of a former wetland so that soils, hydrology, vegetative community, and habitat are a close approximation of the original natural condition and boundary that existed prior to the modification. (Wetland Restoration – Code 657).
- The rehabilitation of a degraded wetland, the reestablishment of a former wetland, or the modification of an existing wetland, where specific wetland functions are augmented beyond the original natural conditions; possibly at the expense of other functions. (Wetland Enhancement – Code 659).
- The management of fish and wildlife habitat created under this standard.

CRITERIA

General Criteria Applicable to All Purposes

The purpose, goals, and objectives of the creation shall be clearly defined in the creation plan, including soils, hydrology, vegetation and fish and wildlife habitat criteria that are to be met and are appropriate for the site and the project objectives.

The soils, hydrology and vegetative conditions existing on the site, the adjacent landscape, and the contributing watershed shall be documented in the planning process.

The nutrient and pesticide tolerance of the plant and animal species likely to occur shall be considered where known nutrient and pesticide contamination exists. Sites suspected of containing hazardous material shall be tested to identify appropriate remedial measures. If remedial measures are not possible or practicable, the practice shall not be planned.

Water rights, if applicable, shall be assured prior to creation.

Upon completion, the site shall meet the appropriate wetland criteria and provide wetland functions and values as defined in the project's objectives

Invasive species, federal/state listed noxious plant species, and nuisance species (e.g., those whose presence or overpopulation jeopardize the effectiveness of the practice) shall be controlled on the site.

Native plant species shall be used where practical to establish required vegetation.

The landowner shall obtain all necessary local, state and federal permits prior to installation of this practice.

Complete the Wetland Planning Checklist, Appendix A, Chapter 13, NRCS Engineering Field Handbook prior to initiating wetland creation activities.

Criteria for Soils

Created wetlands shall be located in landscape positions and soil types capable of supporting the planned wetland function.

Changes to soil hydrodynamic and biogeochemical properties such as permeability, porosity, pH, or soil organic carbon levels shall be made as needed to meet the planned objectives.

Loosening of compacted soils, addition of organic matter, or other soil preparation activities, shall be accomplished where necessary to establish desired vegetation.

Refer to the Oklahoma hydric soils list and the appropriate county soil survey for specific information on soil characteristics and properties.

Criteria for Hydrology

The hydroperiod, hydrodynamics, and dominant water source shall meet the project objectives. The creation plan shall document the adequacy of available water sources based on groundwater investigation, stream gage data, water budgeting, or other appropriate means.

The work associated with the wetland shall not adversely affect adjacent properties or other water users unless agreed to by signed written letter, easement or permit.

Timing and level setting of water control structures required for the establishment and maintenance of vegetation, soil, and wildlife and fish habitat functions shall be determined.

Water control structures that may impede the movement of target aquatic species or species of concern shall meet the criteria in the standard for Aquatic Organism Passage (396).

Refer to Oklahoma NRCS standards for Pond (378), Structure for Water Control (587), Diversion (362), or Dike (356) where embankments, water control structures, or diversions are needed to achieve the desired wetland hydrology.

Criteria for Vegetation

Hydrophytic vegetation planned to meet the selected wetland functions shall be compatible with the planned soil and hydrologic conditions. Preference shall be given to native wetland plants with localized genetic material.

Where natural colonization of acceptable species can realistically be expected to occur within five years, sites may be left to revegetate naturally. If not, the appropriate species will be established by seeding or planting.

Adequate substrate material and site preparation necessary for proper establishment of the selected plant species shall be included in the plan.

Where planting and/or seeding is necessary, the minimum number of native species to be established shall be based upon the types of vegetative communities present and the vegetation type planned. To achieve habitat diversity and minimize the adverse effects of climate, disease, and other limiting factors, several species adapted to the site will be established.

Seeding rates shall be based upon the percentage of pure live seed and labeled with a current seed tag from a registered seed laboratory identifying the germination rate, purity analysis, and other seed statistics.

Preference shall be given to native wetland plants with localized genetic material.

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Where natural colonization of selected species will realistically dominate within 5 years, sites may be left to revegetate naturally. If a site has not become dominated by the targeted species within 5 years, active forms of re-vegetation may be required.

Restoration of vegetation on adjacent wetland buffers will be accomplished with native vegetation adapted to the site. Herbaceous plantings will consist of native grasses, forbs, and legumes planted in accordance with the Oklahoma Conservation Practice Standard Range Planting (550). Tree plantings on buffers will be established in accordance with the Oklahoma Conservation Practice Standard Tree/Shrub Establishment (612).

All herbaceous and woody vegetative plantings will be and based on recommendations from the NRCS biologist, resource specialist, WRP specialist, or ODWC wetland biologist.

Criteria for Creation of Landscape and Topographic Features

Topographic features (both micro/macro-topography) should be created to achieve variation in water depths and habitat conditions.

Micro-topography is characterized by features with less than 6 inches of relative elevation change. Macro-topography consists of features with greater than 6 inches of relative elevation changes.

Macro-topographic feature designs should be installed in accordance with specifications identified in standard drawings contained in "Oklahoma Engineering Forms and Standard Drawings" which are available on the Oklahoma NRCS website or as described in Oklahoma NRCS Conservation Practice Job Sheet 657 02 "Using Micro and Macro Topography in Wetland Restoration", or as designed on a site by site basis by the WRP project engineer.

CONSIDERATIONS

Hydrology Considerations

Consider the general hydrologic effects of the restoration, including:

- Impacts on downstream stream hydrographs, volumes of surface runoff, and groundwater resources due to changes of water use and movement created by the restoration.

Consider the impacts of water level management, including:

- Increased predation due to concentrating aquatic organisms, including herptivores, in small pool areas during drawdowns.
- Increased predation of amphibians due to high water levels that can sustain predators.
- Decreased ability of aquatic organisms to move within the wetland and from the wetland area to adjacent habitats, including anadromous fish and herptivores, as water levels are decreased.
- Increases in water temperature on-site, and in off-site receiving waters.
- Changes in the quantity and direction of movement of subsurface flows due to increases or decreases in water depth.
- The effect changes in hydrologic regime have on soil bio-geochemical properties; including oxidation/reduction, maintenance of organic soils, and salinity increase or decrease on adjacent areas.
- The potential for water control structures, dikes, and macrotopographic to negatively impact aquatic organism passage.

Vegetation Considerations

Consider:

- The relative effects of planting density on wildlife habitat versus production rates in woody plantings.

- The potential for vegetative buffers to increase function by trapping sediment, cycling nutrients, and removing pesticides.
- The selection of vegetation for the protection of structural measures that is appropriate for wetland function.
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- The potential for invasive or noxious plant species to establish on bare soils after construction and before the planned plant community is established.

Soil Considerations

Consider changes of physical soil properties, including:

- Increasing or decreasing saturated hydraulic conductivity by mechanical compaction or tillage, as appropriate.
- Incorporating soil amendments.
- The effect of construction equipment on soil density, infiltration, and structure.

Consider changes in soil bio-geochemical properties, including:

- Increasing soil organic carbon by incorporating compost.
- Increasing or decreasing soil pH with lime, gypsum, or other compounds.

Wildlife Habitat Considerations

Consider:

- The addition of coarse woody debris on sites to be restored to woody plant communities for an initial carbon source.
- The potential to restore habitat capable of supporting wildlife with the ability to control disease vectors such as mosquitoes.
- The potential to establish fish and wildlife corridors linking the site to adjacent

landscapes, streams and waterbodies and to increase the sites colonization by native flora.

- The need to provide barriers to passage for unwanted or predatory wildlife species.

PLANS AND SPECIFICATIONS

Plans and specifications for this practice shall be prepared for each site. Plans and specifications shall be recorded using approved specifications sheets, job sheets, or other documentation. The plans and specifications for structural features will include, at a minimum, a plan view, quantities, and sufficient profiles and cross-sections to define the location, line, and grade for stakeout and checkout. Plans and specifications shall be reviewed and approved by staff with appropriate job approval authority.

OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE

A separate Operation and Maintenance Plan will be prepared for sites that have structural features. The plan will include specific actions for the normal and repetitive operation of installed structural items, especially water control structures, if included in the project. The plan will also include the maintenance actions necessary to assure that constructed items are maintained as constructed for the life of the project. It will include the inspection schedule, a list of items to inspect, a checklist of potential damages to look for, recommended repairs, and procedures for documentation.

Management and monitoring activities needed to ensure the continued success of the wetland functions may be included in the above plan, or in a separate Management and Monitoring Plan. In addition to the monitoring schedule, this plan may include the following:

- The timing and methods for the use of fertilizers, pesticides, prescribed burning, or mechanical treatments

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- Circumstances when the use of biological control of undesirable plant species and pests (e.g. using predator or parasitic species) is appropriate, and the approved methods.
- Actions which specifically address any expected problems from invasive or noxious species
- The circumstances which require the removal of accumulated sediment.
- Conditions which indicate the need to use haying or grazing as a management tool, including timing and methods.

REFERENCES

USDA, NRCS. Wetland Restoration, Enhancement or Creation. Engineering Field Handbook Chapter 13, Part 650, pp. 3, 24, 77,

USDA, NRCS, 2003. ECS 190-15 Wetland Restoration, Enhancement, Management & Monitoring. 425 pp.

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